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Current Opinion

Professor Wernle's Estimate of Jesus.

In a lengthy estimate of Wernle's *Beginnings of Christianity* in the current number of the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, Dean Wallace, of Victoria University, says: "I wonder at some of the reviews of the work in presumably evangelical quarters. They must be due either to carelessness, or to latent sympathy with an essentially Unitarian conception of Christianity." That which the reviewer finds as left by Wernle after melting out all the alloy of primitive Christianity is thus summarized: "He retains many an old phrase without retaining its old meaning. He certainly leaves us the fatherhood of God. He leaves us the brotherhood of man. He leaves us the ethics of Jesus. He leaves us, moreover, a Jesus who, while neither divine nor sinless, is yet a very wonderful personality, of a higher than human consciousness, contact with whom will redeem men, in the sense of delivering them from the love and power of sin, and inspiring them for the *Imitatio Christi*." But "apart from a profounder estimate of sin than our author anywhere exhibits, no man ever formed an evangelical conception of Christology or soteriology."

The Seat of Authority in the Science of Theology

It is the opinion of President Little, of Garrett Biblical Institute, that "we have had the authority of popes, bishops, councils, and synods; we have had the authority of individuals and of sects; but never have we had in religion the kind of authority to which in the exact sciences we are learning to defer." It is to history that his appeal is made, when he continues his contribution to the recent number of the *Methodist Review* in the following terms: "Let us distinguish between those things which, though hidden from the wise and prudent, are revealed to babes, and those things which in their very nature are accessible only to the powerful and instructed mind. Let us beware of deferring, as authorities, to those that have no respect for reason and in the arrogance of self-willed ignorance deliver judgments upon questions of which they have not even elementary knowledge. Such judgments, whether uttered by Judge Lynch or by a General Council, are sure to be reversed, but the mischief that they cause is irreparable. The history of theology abounds with them, and hence the profound distrust with which the Christian teacher has to deal. Those, therefore,

who are charged with fixing the limits within which the mind of a great organization shall have free course are solemnly bound to be sure of their own competency. For nowhere can incompetency be more criminal than in such a tribunal. It was such a tribunal that crucified the Lord of life and glory."

When is God Present in an Experience?

"The evidence of God's special presence in an experience does not depend upon the fact of visions, nor even upon their content, *per se*, but upon results worthy of God. People are sometimes genuinely converted in trances, but the conversion is proved, not by the trance, but by the life. The trance is explainable by known laws, but this surely does not argue that God is not in the conversion. Was it not worthy of God to work through what we now know to be the laws of mind to bring Saul to a knowledge of his error? And is not the marvelous transformation of the man, and the use of the minutest peculiarities of temperament, training, and past experience to achieve this result, sufficient proof that God's hand was in the work?" Such is the concluding paragraph of an examination of "The Psychology of Saul's Conversion," by Clarence D. Royse, in the current issue of the *American Journal of Religious Psychology*. The criterion here enunciated seems valid for all experiences, whether analogous to that of Saul or more or less striking than it in outward form.

What Should a Minister Know?

The bishop of Ripon, in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1905, discusses "The Education of a Minister of God," and reaches the conclusion that "we should train men to know their own times; to extend their studies beyond the narrow limits of a few centuries; to explore the facts of religious consciousness in all systems and in all ages; to understand that only as they bring their teaching into ethical contact with men can they expect spontaneous recognition of their authority, and to make men realize that ethical demands finally force men back into spiritual experience; for final and soul-satisfying harmony with God can only be reached in that supreme personal surrender of which love is the inspiration, and the Cross of Christ the changeless and significant symbol."

What is Religion?

Not a new question, but one which is ever and anon receiving a new answer, and will continue to engage the thought of minds with a tendency to definition. Professor F. R. Beattie gives his conception in the latest number of the *Baptist Review and Expositor*. "Religion is a mode of

knowing, of believing, of feeling, and of acting, which grows out of, and implies, an inherent and organic relation between God, its object, and man, its subject." The religion of Schiller has been the subject of study and statement in more than one German and English article in recent weeks. Mr. W. H. Carruth, in the *Open Court*, states his conclusions as to the content of Schiller's conception in terms which may be set down for comparison with the above definition: "Religion was for Schiller the longing and the striving for harmony with the spirit and tendency of the universe. . . . He distrusted religious organizations of all kinds, fearing their tendency to fetter the human spirit, whereas he found the very life of the spirit to consist in the liberty to discover and assimilate the will of God."